

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday September 5. 1693.

Quest. 1. **I** Am of a Sanguine Complexion, and find by a little Observation that my Passions are very apt to quarrel for the Preheminence; I know not which breeds in me the strongest Emotions, Joy or Grief; and I desire your Resolution which may be most easily resisted, Pleasure or Pain?

Ans. If Pleasure be consider'd as a good, and Pain as an Evil, it is not to be doubted but the latter is as insupportable to our Nature as the former is agreeable to it. But there are two sorts of Good and Evil, Pain and Pleasure, one of the Mind, the other of the Body, and many times the Pains and Sufferings of the Body are the Joys of the Mind, and the Pleasures and Gratifications of the Flesh, the Crosses and Torments of the Spirit. Now there are scarce any pure and unmixt Pleasures or Pains in the World, but they are usually mingled one with the other: and if they could be separated, Pain would turn the Scale, as being the more heavy and difficult to be supported. In reference to which mixture the Greek Poet Judiciously feigned, that there are two Vessels at the entrance of Heaven, one full of Honey and Sweetness, the other full of Gall and Bitterness: Of which two Liquors mingled together, Jupiter makes all to drink, and tempers with them every thing he pours down here below; so that the Pains and Pleasures of the Mind or the Body, being moderate and indifferently tempered with each of those Liquors, may be supported by Men; Pleasure and Good (as the more Natural) much more easily than Evil and Pain, which are destructive to Nature: but when both of them are extream, and the sweetness of Pleasures is not abated by any little mixture of Unhappiness, nor the bitterness of Misfortunes lessened by small satisfaction, then Men cannot relish this Potion, because they are not accustomed to things pure and sincere, but to Confusion and Mixture, and cannot bear the excess of Grief or Joy, the extremities of which are found to be fatal. As first for grief, *Licinius* finding himself Condemn'd for cheating the Publick, dyed with regret; *Q. Fabius*, because he was cited before the Tribunes of the People for violating the Laws of Nations; *Julia*, *Cæsar's* Daughter, at the sight of the bloody Garments of her Husband *Pompey*: And in the last Age, one of the Sons of *Gilbert Duke of Monpensier* going into Italy, dyed upon the Sepulchre of his Father, which he went thither to see. And as for Joy, besides our own Experience, many remarkable Examples show the excess of it as deadly. *Diagoras Rhodius*, seeing his three Sons victorious in one day at the *Olympick Games*, dyed with Joy. The like Fate also befell *Crito the Lacedemonian*, upon the same Victory of one of his Sons. *Dionysius the Tyrant of Sicily*, and the Poet *Sophocles*, having heard that they had won the Bays for Tragedies, dyed both immediately; and so did the Poet *Philippides*, upon winning that for Comedies. *Zeuxis the Painter* having drawn the Picture of an Old Woman very odly, dyed with Laughing at it. To which *Paulus Jovius* produces two like Examples of later date, one of *Sinus*, General of the *Turks Gallies*, upon the recovery of his only Son, whom he thought lost; and the other of *Leo the Xth.* upon taking *Milan*, which he had passionately desired, both of which dyed for Joy. Thus both these Passions have great resemblance in their Excesses; they equally transport a Man beyond the bounds of Reason, the one by its pleasingness makes him forget himself, and the other by its bitterness leads him to despair. Grief destroys life, either by the violent Agitations of the Spirits, or by their Condensation, which stopping the passages, hinders breathing, from whence follows Suffocation and Death. Pleasure and Joy produce the same effect by contrary Causes, namely, by too great a dil-

tion of the Spirits, which causes weakness, and that weakness Death.

And since they may be both so fatal to you, if you are not past that foolish Age, when you choose a Mistress, let her be Wife and Good, that she may know how to prevent your dying with Joy, and have too much Compassion to suffer you to dye of Grief, tho' we believe the last generally least fatal.

Quest. 2. A Young Man came lately to me, earnestly desiring my Advice: The Case is this, he hath secretly stole from a former Master of his a Summ of Money, whereof he heartily repents, but is doubtful, whether God Almighty will pardon this Sin, without making restitution to his said Master wronged, which he is unable to do, and if he should make it known, he is inevitably ruined, for it seems his said Master bears him an inveterate Hatred, and I hear he is a very malicious man. Your Answer is desired as soon as may be, the Youngster being in no quiet Condition.

Ans. He is obliged to make Restitution, if it be possible to be done, if not of himself, by the Assistance of his Friends, amongst which he may acquaint some Wife Person that has an Interest in his Welfare, who will probably be willing to assist him, if he has any grounds to believe he's really reform'd; but if he can do neither of these, and his Master is such an one as represents, We think all he can do, is to endeavour to make Restitution as soon as may be, and to abridge himself of his Expences, and other Charges, as much as he can, till he makes up the Summ; and then that his Master may not have it in his power to injure him, he may send him it by an unknown hand, which will be sufficient, he not knowing of the Injury, he is not obliged to discover it to him, since he can fully make him amends without it.

Quest. 3. A Man had two Wives, and dyes, and he owing me some Monies, paid me over as I thought some 16 l. now I desire to know which of them has a right to it?

Ans. The first was only his Wife, and therefore if he dispos'd of it to no Body else, it belongs only to her.

Quest. 4. A Friend of mine having a Kindness for a young Gentlewoman, and hath by keeping of her Company from time to time, so entangled himself, that he doubts whether ever he shall be able to keep from her, and if he Marries her he is undone, she being no way suitable for him, and all his Friends are against it: He formerly promised her Marriage, to which she made him no Answer, but now a little while since she hath by some Friend or other given him to understand that she now is willing: Now it is desired of you to satisfy him, Whether he may not lawfully refuse her, she not joining in with him when he made her the Promise, and having since told her that he could not by no means Marry her, his Friends being all against it on whom he depends?

Ans. If he has Engag'd the young Womans Affections, and at the time he Promis'd her she gave him any Assurance, equivalent to it, tho' not a Formal Promise, We think he can't handsomly or honestly leave her, otherwise We think he's at his own Liberty.

Quest. 5. A Friend of mine was Courted by a Gentleman after a very extraordinary manner for some Years; he sounding as often as the frown'd, continually pursuing her whether in Town or Country, making his Addresses as well by Friends as himself, to all which she was averie a long time, till she had had such an Acquaintance with him, as she thought she might venture on him without being deceiv'd; all this while she could



could perceive nothing disorderly either in his Temper, or Actions, and began to think she should be extremely happy in a Husband, upon which she being still importun'd by him, promised to have him; but soon after she finds her Mistake, the Spark proves too Modish to be content to make his Addresses but to one Lady, which she hearing, tells him of, he confesses, promises amendment, and she forgives him, and a little after all things were prepared for the Wedding, but a day or two before, he being resolved to try his Mistress's forgiving Faculty, tells her, Marriage was only a Political Institution, and that before God they were Man and Wife already, and therefore he thought it a needless Ceremony, and could never approve on't; at which she was very much startled, and went out of the Room and left him, and has never since either heard from, or seen him. *She is now desirous to be satisfied, if she may not lawfully Marry another, notwithstanding her Promise to him, having met with a Gentleman that's very agreeable, and one she thinks as well on, as of any of the Sex.*

*Ans.* She's undoubtedly free to Marry whom she pleases, for she did not promise to have him whether he would or no, and since he has refus'd her, she's any Body's that can catch her.

*Quest. 5. I am not a little desirous of Learning, but look upon it impossible to make any considerable Progress in it, amongst the various Treatises we have of every Science, except we could have an infallible Rule established, and am of the Opinion that the Sciences might be reduced into one, or at least extremely abridged, on which I desire your Judgment?*

*Ans.* The Desire of Knowledge is very charming, but Man's Life is too short to satisfy it, unless the Sciences were all reduced; and the way to abridge them would be to retrench out of each of them every thing that was unprofitable, or not pertaining to the Science, as are most Metaphysical Questions which are treated of in Logick; Natural, in Medicine; Moral, Natural and Juridical, in Divinity, to avoid repetitions, and thus the fifteen Books of *Euclid* might be reduced into half the Number, and comprized in little space; and so of others: But it would be chiefly requisite to be careful of laying down good Principles, and Teaching those Sciences with Order, whose Numerousness causes Confusion, and is now more hurtful than their scarcity was formerly. Thus *Justinian* reduced all the Law-Books of his time into two Volumes, the *Digests* and the *Code*; and the Jews comprisd all things that can be known in one single Science, called *Cabbala*, as the *Druids* did their Disciplines under certain Maxims and Aphorisms: And we might soon understand and speak well of all things, if instead of spending the fittest time of our Age (as we do unprofitably) in learning to speak Latin and Greek, we employed it after the

Example of the Ancients upon the Mathematics and other Sciences, and as for forming the Judgment, that might be done in a short time by Logick, and to the Knowledge of things Natural, Supernatural and Moral, might easily be obtain'd in a few Years, if all Superfluities were retrenched.

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